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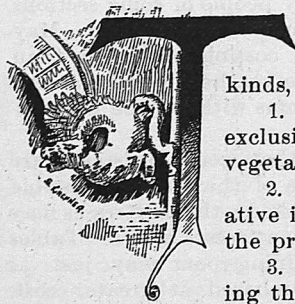
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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## IMITATIONAL ORNAMENT.



THE most general classification of ornament distinguishes three different kinds, viz.:

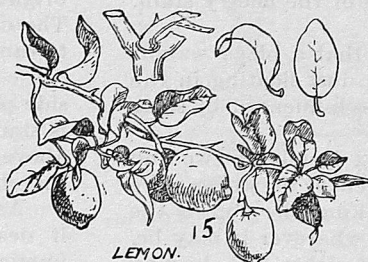
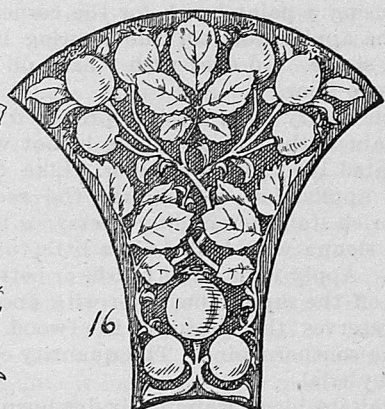
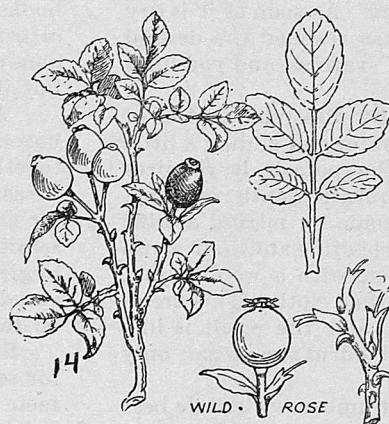
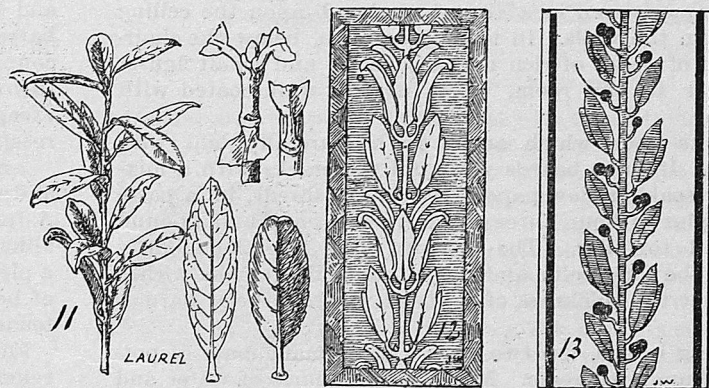
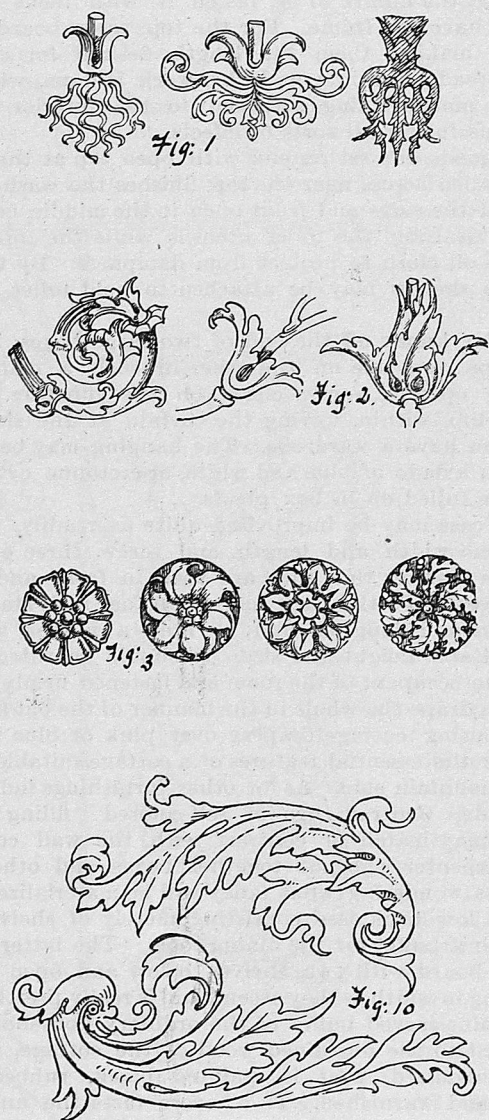
1. The Imitational, or ornament derived exclusively from motives found in animal and vegetable life.
2. The Inventional, or work of the imaginative instinct without analogy to the forms of the productions of nature.
3. A Mixed ornament, formed by combining the two others.

In the present article we will consider the subject of imitational ornament. It is chiefly from the vegetable kingdom that the ornamentist derives his ideas of decorative grace and beauty. We have only to examine the best work in the various styles of art to see the wonderful grace and elegance in the work of those flower worshippers, the ancient decorative artists. The pink and hyacinth were favorites with the Persian decorators. In Egyptian decoration we see a universal use of the lotus and papyrus,

of the root is shown, and the character of growth expressed in such a way as to prevent confusion and obscurity.

As a general rule, in using plant forms, all redundancy or excrescence of growth must be avoided, for however interesting such peculiarities might be to the botanist, the business of the decorator consists exclusively in expressing the higher beauties, and decorative importance of plants in general. He should handle such specimens as best exhibit the intentions of nature, avoiding on the other hand, starved and shriveled specimens, and on the other, those exhibiting too great a redundancy of growth. The ideal form is that which he strives for. Not only does the plant itself, as a whole, offer infinite suggestions, but its details are in themselves highly suggestive. In addition to the roots of plants already mentioned, leaflets or bracts growing at the junction of stems and leaves also furnish ideas and forms for the making up of ornaments, as shown in Fig. 2.

On looking down on certain plants, as, for instance, the madder plant, we notice their leaves arranged in a whorl around the joints on their stems, and a growth of this kind must have been the origin of ancient rosettes and pateræ. The results obtained by such a grouping of leaves are peculiarly fine and



the Japanese made use of the chrysanthemum, and the Chinese, the peony. The Greeks used the honeysuckle and acanthus leaf, while the decorators of the Middle Ages imitated the leaves of the trefoil, the vine, hop, hawthorne, mallow, etc. In the present day our decorators make use of almost every species of vegetable life for their motives, and we see in brocades, laces, cretonnes, and wall papers, the wild poppy, the wild rose, the daisy, the lily, the mallow, the oak, the orange, the lemon, etc., together with grasses and ferns. In fact, no form of plant life seems to have been ignored by modern decorators. The method of treating such decorative motives ranges from the most natural to the most conventional use of the plant or flower. The decorators aiming to portray not only the form of the object, but its soul also. Branches, stems, leaves and flowers are most often used. Root forms are not used as much as they might be, doubtless from the fact that in nature the root of the plant is hardly ever visible, and besides they present an incongruous mass not often suggestive from a decorative standpoint. Roots have been used in Indian and Persian work as well as in mediæval work, as shown in Fig. 1. In these examples the general outline only

strong and very suitable for sculpture work, (see Fig. 3.)

Next to the human figure, the acanthus leaf has been the most widespread ornament, from the days of Callimachus, the inventor of the Corinthian capital. Fig. 4 shows the natural acanthus leaf, and Figs. 5, 6 and 7 illustrate its ornamental forms, which, as will be seen, bear little resemblance to the natural leaf. The pipes in the conventional leaf are less important, and almost omitted in examples of small work, such as the acanthus of pilasters and panel ornament, constructive strength not being required, to such an extent as in large capitals. (See Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7.)

On candelabra and small pillars, the leaves lie flatter and overlap each other and possess more serrations and detail than the acanthus on pillars, because like any other art production the smaller the scale, the more detail is necessary, (see Fig. 8.)

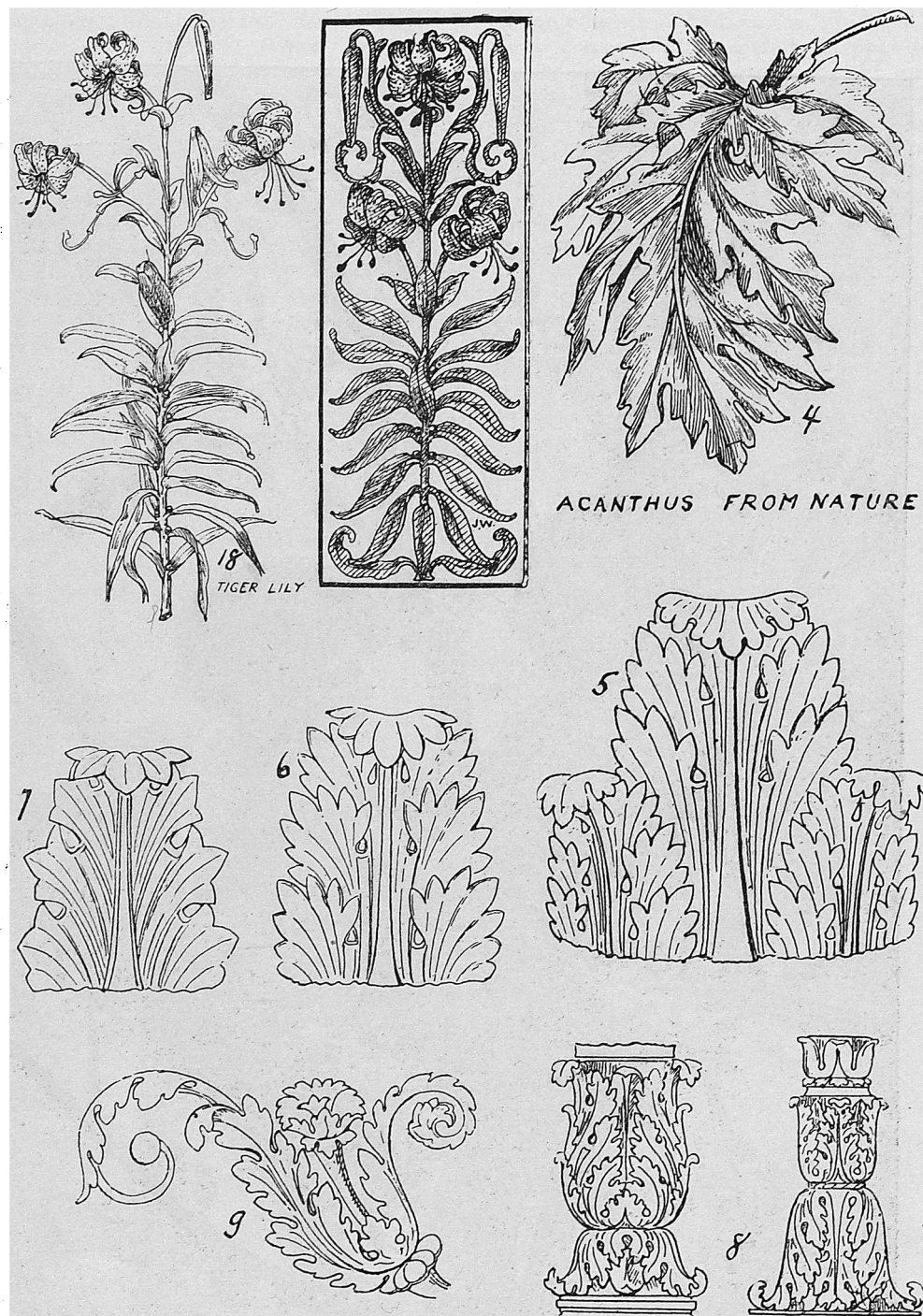
The Greeks use the acanthus sparingly, and of the kind known as the *Acanthus spinosa*, or prickly variety, while the Romans prefer the *Acanthus mollis*, or the soft leaved, cultivated kind. Fig. 9 shows a bit of the soft leaved acanthus from the temple of Jupiter Stator, in Rome. The Romans use the acan-



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thus with prodigal excess, covering every available space in their buildings from mere love of show, which was a great feature of the Roman character. The more modern type of acanthus, as illustrated by Fig. 10, is of a very free and fanciful character, its sinuosities being chiefly generated by the free play of the brush. The acanthus is the parent of all subsequent styles of

character of the plant, as the illustrations here testify. Fig. 11 represents the natural laurel with detached leaves and sections of the stem. Figs. 12 and 13 show how suitable this plant is for border designs, either upright or horizontal. Fig. 14 represents the wild rose with details of root, leaf and stem, and Fig. 15 represents the lemon.



decorative foliage, down to the period of Gothic ornament. Artists have sought in vain to discover a variety of leaf that might in time rival the acanthus in ornament.

Modern decorators use a wider range of plant life than their predecessors. Morris, Crane, Burne-Jones and others have made a profound study of nature, and owing to their efforts, decoration, instead of being a slavish copy of ancient methods, has become enthused with the freshness, beauty and truth of nature. An honest effort has been made not to violate the growth and

Figs. 16 and 17 show the decorative suitability of these plants for panel spaces of any form, or for all over patterns for brocades, cretonnes and paper-hangings. For narrow, upright panels, plants of upright growth, such as lilies, ox-eye daisies, etc., would be suitable. Fig. 18 is the tiger lily, and Fig. 19 represents its treatment for panel decoration.

NOTE.—The illustrations in this article are from drawings by Mr. James Ward, Head Master of the Gov't School of Art, Macclesfield, England.

